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The Grocer Guide to...

The
Grocer

Logistics



Analysis

Driving into the perfect storm

Food and drink industry logistics suppliers have had to step up to a difficult market this year and, with Brexit looming, it sees the challenges are only going to continue coming

Caught between the devil of Covid-19 and the deep blue sea of Brexit, the UK food and drink industry is preparing to fight off a two-headed demon, come 1 January 2021, and so much is still unclear or unknown.

In his leader column on 6 November¹, as England headed into its second coronavirus lockdown, The Grocer editor Adam Leyland said: “Any normal government, in such a grave crisis as this, sending the country into enforced hibernation for a second time, would recognise that Brexit is an unnecessary additional risk right now.”

Indeed, with a Brexit deal still not brokered in early November and House of Lords ministers rejecting controversial legislation from the government’s proposed Internal Market Bill, there are still a lot of major issues to be resolved and ruffled feathers to

be smoothed. And this, despite the government attempting to ease the pain earlier this year, by extending its plans for full border checks on EU goods beyond 1 January, with businesses able to delay submitting customs declarations and tariff payments until July 2021.

Yet as beleaguered food and drinks businesses approach their busiest season of the year, the immediate question is one of priorities. Do they focus on a second lockdown and the challenges that entails? Do they get themselves totally Brexit-ready – although how to do that is still something of a mystery? Or do they simply put the consumer first and focus on their needs and requirements as the festive season – however limited it might be by movement and social restrictions – gets under way?

While it has long been known that the consumer is increasingly in the driving seat when it comes to NPd in the food and drink industry, the level of control exerted on the logistics industry’s throttle has never been more evident than over the past year.

Covid-19 has brought into sharp relief the simple fact that today’s consumers are dictating how, where and when they buy their groceries – not just what form those groceries will take.

Asset management software and technology specialist XPTech points to “an exponential growth in demand for delivery services”, with the industry searching for ways to achieve “safe last-mile mechanisms”.

Meanwhile, logistics provider Knowles Transport managing director Alex Knowles points to a recent report by Alvarez & Marsal and Retail Economics



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[The Shape of Retail: Consumers and the New Normal², published June 2020], which he says estimates that about a quarter of UK consumers – 17.2 million – will permanently change their shopping habits as a result of Covid and move to online. “As such, increasing e-commerce and home delivery has changed the dynamics of the logistics industry, requiring us to have the agility and flexibility to adjust our model to meet the demands of the industry, which, as we have seen in past months, can literally change overnight.”

In this fast-moving and ever-changing environment, says Knowles, logistics service partners are key to ensuring the multitude of customer expectations are delivered at the right cost in order to allow retail suppliers to achieve optimal efficiency and grow their business. “Every part of

the supply chain has a responsibility to ensure we are able to meet the expectations and demands of our customers, but also those of the end-consumer,” he says.

Andy Blandford, managing director, Northern Europe at intralogistics, supply chain and materials handling firm Dematic, says: “During the pandemic, we saw a seismic shift to online shopping even for ‘essentials’ like groceries, with total online spending in May 2020 at \$82bn, up 77% year on year (Adobe via Forbes). While this presented an opportunity for many retailers to thrive at a time when physical shops were shut, it has also presented a challenge, requiring them to keep pace with ubiquitous demand for fast and efficient product fulfilment. To overcome this, many retailers turned to short-term solutions

such as third-party delivery services and temporary manual labour, which proved inadequate and helped them see investment in supply chain automation as an essential part of their business.”

Automation and technology

The need for agility to react quickly to market demands, as well as the increasing requirement for safety and assurance in a Covid world are ramping up investment in logistics technology and automation.

“Covid-19 has proven that supply chains must be able to pivot, shifting their focus at a moment’s notice – and this is exactly the sort of flexibility that high-end supply chain automation solutions can provide,” adds Dematic’s Blandford. “Automation provides the flexibility to identify and adjust for changes in customer

Analysis

traffic and buying patterns, both in-store and online. Automation can also maintain fulfilment processes during unexpected disruptions and minimise the risk of Covid-19 for employees working in warehouses.” As an example, Dematic points to its automated guided vehicles, which move goods around the warehouses without manual intervention.

At XPTech, the company quickly innovated a solution to address, in particular, the last-mile mechanism. Its Sign4 technology “restores the ability to capture signatures and replaces signing on a driver tablet, or using pen and paper, with someone signing their own device”, explains chief executive officer Oliver Woodmansee.

This highlights that technology has an important role to play in terms of safety, both of delivery and of the food drink delivered. Countering consumer concerns on safety and provenance, particularly in uncertain times, is vital, says IdentiGEN, which believes “transparency and traceability are essential in promoting consumer confidence in food” and that as shoppers adapt to the new normal way of living imposed by Covid-19, they are increasingly seeking affirmation of food authenticity right the way through the supply chain. The company’s DNA TraceBack system aims to achieve just that and it has partnered with retailers such as Marks & Spencer to give consumers the confidence they seek. “Effective traceability is essential to inform a truly sustainable supply chain,” it says. “The [DNA TraceBack] technology helps to differentiate and elevate those who are doing the right thing and delivering the standards promised and expected by consumers.”

Sustainable solutions

Amid all the political shenanigans around Brexit and Covid-19, the urge for increased sustainability and environmental consciousness has not disappeared. IdentiGEN maintains 71% of people consider climate change as serious as the Covid-19 crisis: “It is important to manage the paradox between value and price and move from a low-cost culture to a value culture, which values high-quality and sustainable food.”

The logistics industry is only too aware that it accounts for “a large part



of worldwide emissions”, says Knowles. “It is essential that third-party logistics (3PL) providers ensure their operations minimise the negative effects on the environment.” The company, where the key operations are transporting and warehousing, invests in low-emission engines and operates LNG vehicles, which save a further 20% on CO₂ emissions compared with conventional diesel-powered engines, it says. It is also keeping a close eye on the potential of electric trucks for localised deliveries.

The push for greener, more resilient supply chains that reduce HGV miles and subsequent air pollution, along with the particular needs of Covid-19, have seen rail freight increase in popularity once more. “During the first lockdown and for the first time in many years, rail freight was prioritised over passenger trains,” says specialist Prologis, which runs DIRFT (Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal). “It might come as a surprise, but most of the nation’s favourite food brands pass through DIRFT,” adds the company, which says that consumer goods now

account for 40%³ of the UK’s rail freight. This centrally located logistics park, featuring logistics buildings from 100,000ft² to 1.6m ft², enables most parts of the UK to be reached in under 4.5 hours (comparable HGV drive time), it adds.

Dematic’s Blandford points to the company’s AutoStore solution, which he says “allows customers who prioritise sustainability in their daily operations to apply that same commitment to the logistics side”.

AutoStore’s high-density design enables customers to increase their storage capacity, while reducing overall warehouse space by up to 75%, it says, while the use of low-energy robots “dramatically reduce electricity use and costs”.

Brexit: the great unknown

Turning to the challenges ahead, there is a well-known saying that the proof of the pudding is in the eating – and nowhere has this been more apt than in the case of the long-awaited Brexit. In short, until 1 January 2021 arrives



Labour difficulties

During the summer, the main focus of labour shortage in the UK was on-farm: how would the harvest be brought in and processed with a lack of foreign workers to help out?

Since then, the issue of labour shortage in some key sectors of the industry – notably transport and logistics – has fallen down the priority list due to Covid and Brexit. But for this sector of the industry, it is still a very pertinent issue.

For Knowles Transport, HGV driver shortage is still a key issue that third-party logistics providers

need to tackle. “The average age of an HGV driver is 53, with 13% of drivers over 60 and, crucially, only 2% under 25,” says managing director Alex Knowles. “We do a lot of work with schools in advertising careers in logistics – driving being a key one. Furthermore, we operate a ‘warehouse to wheels’ scheme, where our warehouse team members can receive training to become a Knowles HGV driver through a structured plan, incorporating both Class 2 HGV driving moving up to Class 1.”

According to

Dematic managing director Northern Europe Andy Blandford, “Covid-19 social distancing rules have meant that only a minimal workforce is allowed in the warehouse at any given time. This has been particularly challenging for businesses that would typically recruit more workers to deal with peaks in demand, such as the pandemic-induced spike in e-commerce orders.”

And while the UK may be in recession and partly in lockdown, consumers will still be looking to cheer themselves

and their loved ones with Christmas gifts, with another spike in deliveries likely in the run-up to the big day.

As XPTech says: “Sharp changes in variability and demand create real challenges in logistical and, more specifically, labour planning. We have invested significantly in digitising our business in the past four years and this has helped us predict variations in demand. By applying technology, any business can deal with the age-old problems associated with running logistical operations.”

(and the potential problems and pitfalls become physical hurdles), the state of affairs is pretty unpredictable.

The issue of tariffs – with a potential average of 18% quoted on imports in the short term – and the resulting costs for both logistics suppliers and food manufacturers are causing grave concern. Meanwhile, with food manufacturers stockpiling in advance of the 1 January 2021 deadline, warehousing space is at a premium.

CEVA Logistics is promoting the benefits of its strategically located The Chill Hub, which opened just over a year ago. Situated at the London Gateway Port way, the company says it has “onboarded multiple consumers from the fresh produce, chilled FMCG and retail industries since opening”.

Meanwhile, Knowles Transport has 2m ft² of warehousing across its sites nationally, which it says is one of the largest footprints of 3PL providers across the country. However, it has taken on additional space to allow customers to hold higher stocks than usual due to Brexit and coronavirus.

“There is a real shortage of quality, food-grade space,” says Knowles. “We are currently operating at near-capacity across our six national distribution centres. Our customers, naturally, are wanting to hold higher stocks in anticipation for Brexit deal-related issues and we have looked to increase our footprint to provide as much buffer stock as we can, as well as the best service to our customers.

“After Brexit and depending on whether a deal is reached with the EU, the demand for space may ease, but at the moment it is very difficult to predict, particularly with Christmas on the horizon.”

Logistics providers are reluctant to comment on Brexit to any great extent, as the negotiations at government level drag on. And it’s hardly surprising. In mid-October, the Food & Drink Federation said: “The perils of a no-deal exit for GB food and drink manufacturing remain as real as ever. In the event of a no-deal Brexit, shoppers will – literally – pay a heavy price.”

Meanwhile as late as 11 November,

Logistics UK (formerly the Freight Transport Association) was calling on government to provide the clarity and systems its members require to prepare for Brexit. In a letter to Michael Gove MP just 50 days before the end of the transition period, Logistics UK policy director Elizabeth de Jong wrote: “With the economy still reeling from handling the impact of Covid-19, the last thing UK PLC needs is another major shock of our own making.

“The logistics industry is committed to making Brexit work for the good of the nation, but at this late stage, we need government’s help now to ensure our industry can continue to support UK business, prevent lorry queues at Dover and empty shelves in Northern Ireland, and make a success of the UK’s departure from the Single Market.”

And that, in a nutshell, is the next wave in the logistics industry’s perfect storm.

Boxout Sources

¹ www.thegrocer.co.uk/leader/brexit-in-such-a-grave-crisis-as-this-its-an-unnecessary-risk/650149.article
² https://www.alvarezandmarsal.com/sites/default/files/consumers_and_the_new_normal.pdf

³ Network Rail, Freight Network Study

CEVA Logistics

Playing it cool on storage

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The Chill Hub

CEVA Logistics' conveniently positioned portside multi-temperature 10,000m² storage facility The Chill Hub, situated at the London Gateway Port way, offers up to 10,000 pallet positions featuring seven independent chambers capable of operating at all temperature ranges, from -25°C through to +16°C.

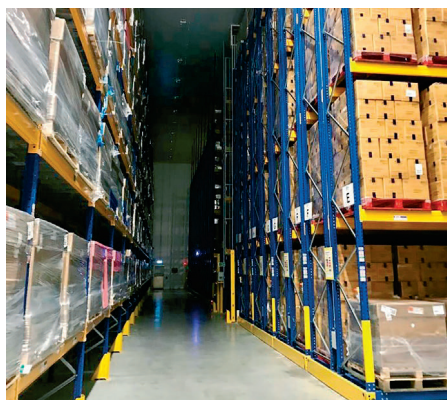
Since opening just over a year ago, the company says it has successfully on-boarded multiple customers from the fresh produce, chilled FMCG and retail industries. "Our customers all experience a first-class service as we look to build long-lasting partnerships," says Martin Olverson, head of business development – cold chain solutions at The Chill Hub.

"Our clients all have access to the customer portal, compatible with any device, and can import data, retrieve live information up to pallet level and upload orders at the touch of a button."

Flexible, fast throughput

In these uncertain times of Covid-19 and a Brexit deal or no deal, CEVA recognises that providing flexible, fast volume throughput to deal with manufacturing and harvest capacity fluctuations is paramount to keep the supply chain moving. "The Chill Hub is strategically located with direct access to the deep-sea port London Gateway and good links to the southern short sea and ro-ro ports. It is also ideally positioned to provide fast, direct distribution of chilled goods to the south east consumer market," says Olverson.

Reducing 'food miles' and carbon emissions through cutting inland



“Providing flexible, fast volume throughput to deal with capacity fluctuations is paramount to keep the supply chain moving”

mileage is only the start of the firm's environmental credentials, he adds. "The Chill Hub is housed in a building of exceptional quality, powered by renewable solar energy. Sensor-controlled, energy-efficient LED lighting, along with rainwater collection used for cleaning and the supply of toilets, provide energy efficiency – an ongoing objective for the company."

Value-add services

In addition, a full range of value-add services at the facility include labelling, boxing, re-palletising, price coding, tagging and kitting.

"With London less than an hour away and The Chill Hub's extensive range of services, there is no need to make your products travel any further for your London and wider south east-based customers. Increased shelf-life and reduced transport costs benefit both our customers and the ultimate end-consumer," he says.

Mathieu Friedberg, CEO at CEVA, adds: "As a one-stop-shop, we can provide a unique value proposition to our customers: faster delivery of goods through The Chill Hub's energy-efficient building; and full visibility and control of the entire inbound operation."



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- Bonded & accredited operation managed by an experienced team. BRC Certificate of approval Grade AA

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- Consistent service excellence
- Clear effective communication
- Quality accredited processes
- Flexible proactive partner
- Ownership and accountability
- Deliver seamless implementation

KEY BENEFITS

- ✓ Faster container turnaround times increasing product shelf life
- ✓ Port location enables overweight container movement
- ✓ Reduced inland movement miles = reduced cost and carbon emissions
- ✓ Direct access to warehouse systems providing real time stock and movement data
- ✓ Dedicated Value Add Services chamber providing QC and re-work capability

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Culina Group

Growth despite challenges

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KEY SERVICES

Chilled Warehousing
Chilled Transportation
Ambient Warehousing
Ambient Transportation
Fresh Produce Logistics
Baked Goods Logistics
Contract packing
Bonded

In spite of the challenges that the UK and indeed the world continue to face with the Covid-19 pandemic, market-leading 3PL provider Culina Group says it is working hard to help keep the UK operating as normally as possible. Culina Group is at the forefront of the daily logistics flows keeping supermarkets stocked and families fed, notes the firm. "It's a real responsibility to fulfil and a credit to every member of our 11,000-strong team across the UK and Ireland that Culina Group is performing so efficiently," it says.

2020 has fast become a unique year of adaptation, in terms of both personal and professional lives, not least in the logistics sector. "As a large cog in this massively important sector, chilled and ambient food and drink logistics provider Culina Group prides itself on its teams of knowledgeable, passionate and committed colleagues, who have recently gone above and beyond in their roles," says the company.

"Culina Group would not be where it is today without our exceptional, highly experienced people," says CEO Thomas van Mourik. "2020 has been tough on everyone, but our teams across the network have really excelled themselves by ensuring communities have everything they need during a difficult time, while contributing to a very positive year for the business. We believe in the value of our people and we invest in them accordingly."

Alongside this, Culina Group continues to build a strong family of specialist and complementary logistics businesses, each operating within its own dedicated marketplace. Colleagues across the group are consistently working together towards a common



"We continue to identify new opportunities for acquisition, investment and joint venture"

goal of growth through service excellence and innovation, it says.

This year saw Culina Group acquire the Fowler Welch business, enabling it to expand its 3PL operations into the fresh produce sector. The Fowler Welch operation is completely synergistic with the Culina Group portfolio of logistics services and is already helping to further strengthen key group contracts with significant clients, it adds.

"Our momentum will continue through the rest of 2020 and beyond. We continue to identify new opportunities for acquisition, joint venture and investment. Most importantly, we consistently provide excellent levels of service to all our clients; this contributes to our growth and strengthens relationships and business confidence," says Van Mourik. "The past 26 years have seen a spectacular trajectory for Culina Group, which has a strong reputation in the marketplace and is going from strength to strength."

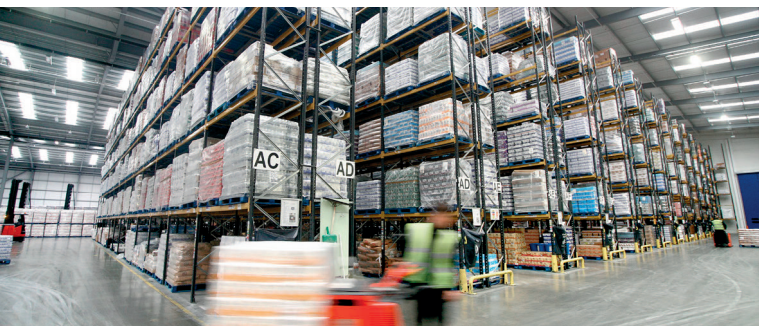




culina GROUP

At Culina Group we offer a series of high-quality, integrated supply chain solutions via our network of strategically located sites across the UK and Ireland. At the heart of our proposition is the provision of warehousing and transportation services for chilled and ambient food and drink products, whilst adding value with various contract packing operations embedded within our network.

THE COMPLETE SOLUTION



Chilled

Ambient

Contract
Packing

Bonded

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Dematic

Future-proof supply chains

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KEY SERVICES

Dematic is an intralogistics innovator that designs, builds and supports intelligent, automated solutions for manufacturing, warehouse and distribution environments for customers that are powering the future of commerce

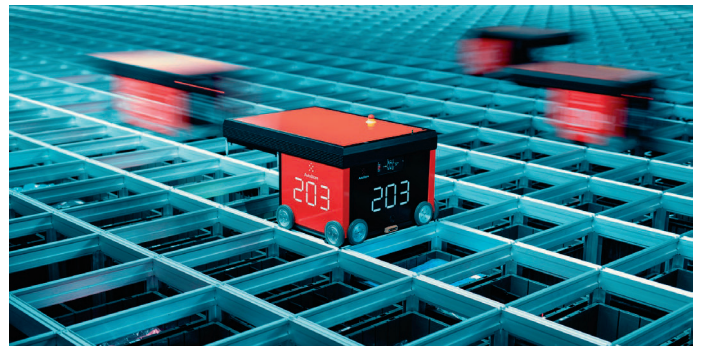
 In its 200-year history of working in supply chain automation, Dematic has witnessed some huge changes. “But the situation we are in right now may be the most seminal shift we’ve ever experienced,” says the company. “Covid-19 has accelerated the online shopping trend, creating a sharp rise in consumer expectations for immediate, on-demand delivery.”

Now, more than ever, efficient online product fulfilment is likely to determine the success or failure of e-commerce businesses, it notes. “Retailers need to be able to handle dramatic fluctuations and spikes in demand, adapting supply chains to the ‘new normal’. Automation will be crucial to this, imbuing fulfilment operations with technology that can flex up or down based on changes in consumer traffic and buying patterns, in-store and online.

“At Dematic, the technologies we provide, such as automated guided vehicles that can move items around a warehouse without manual intervention, will be vital to supply chain operations. The improvements in speed and accuracy achieved by automating product movement from storage to shipping are significant, especially as the technology can be deployed easily within existing delivery and storage systems.”

However, the benefits do not stop there, adds the firm. “Smart automation uses data to inform predictions and flag malfunctions in real time, allowing pre-emptive action in managing warehouse operations and minimising downtime.

“As traffic shifts from in-store to online, software becomes even more critical in making intelligent, data-based decisions to improve



“Retailers need to be able to handle dramatic fluctuations and spikes in demand. Supply chain automation will be crucial to this”

omnichannel distribution and fulfilment processes. We can bring the entire intralogistics supply chain — fulfilment, operations, maintenance and analytics — into one comprehensive ecosystem, helping retailers to respond quickly to consumer demand.”

This, adds Dematic, was the rationale behind its parent company, Kion Group, acquiring UK-based logistics automation specialist Digital Applications International, which equips retailers with data and insights to forecast changes in the market and adapt to fluctuating demand.

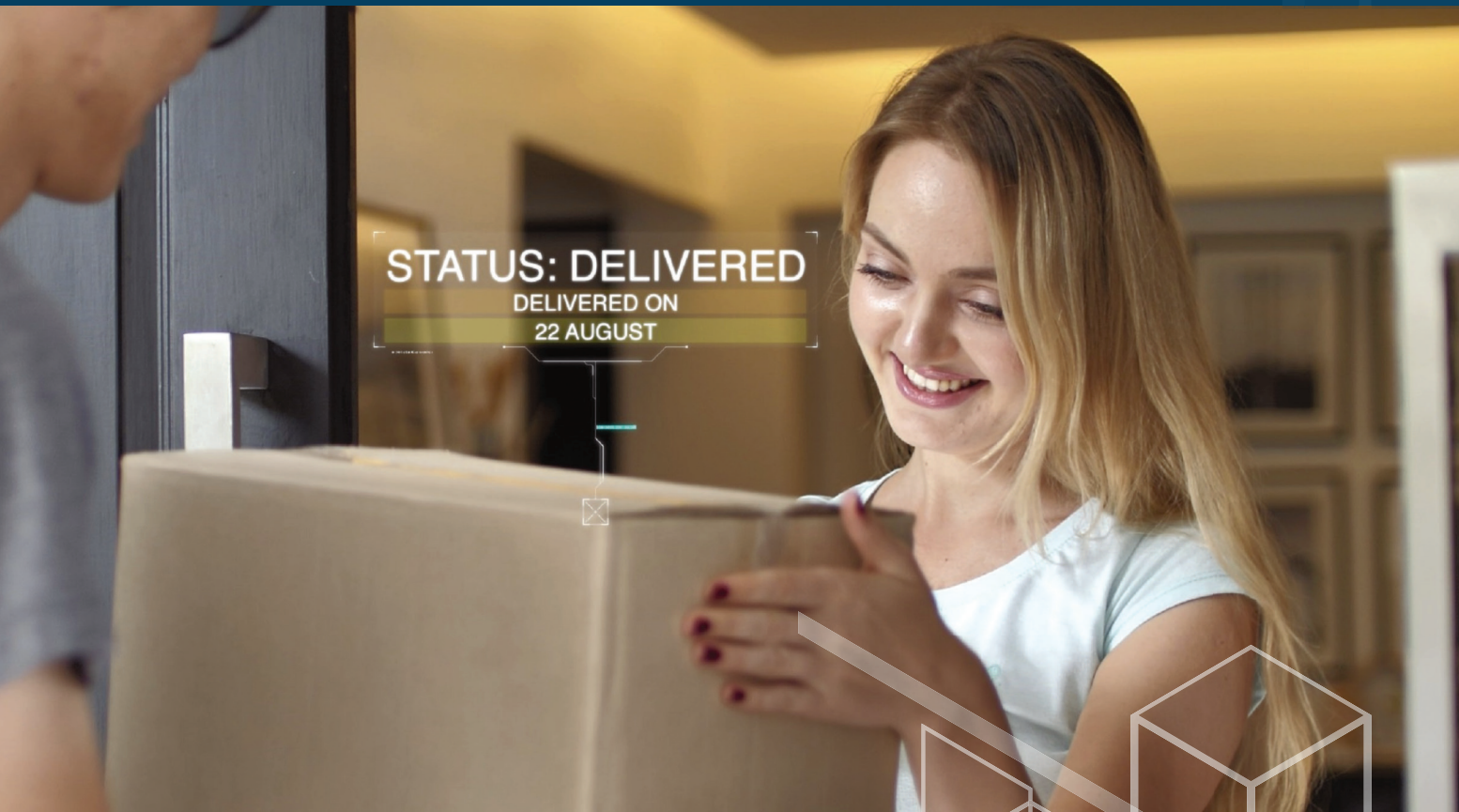
“Dematic is also committed to helping customers meet sustainability goals,” it adds. “Our high-bay pallet automation boasts motor energy recovery technology, saving 35% more energy than the standard technologies, making warehouses efficient and environmentally responsible.

“Every industry will need to prepare for an increasingly volatile world going forward. Automation provides the agility required to deal with market fluctuations, future-proofing supply chains against the unknown.”



Dematic Is Powering the Future of Commerce.

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IdentiGEN

Effective traceability

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IdentiGEN**DNA TRACEBACK**

Today's savvy consumers demand ever-greater levels of information to identify where their food comes from and how it is produced.

As shoppers adapt to the 'new normal' imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, they are seeking affirmation of food authenticity – from fork to farm – to help inform and validate their food choices as they shop both online and in-store.

"With IdentiGEN's DNA TraceBack, retailers can scientifically verify product messages and claims to help tell stories with confidence, building loyalty, differentiation and trust in a highly competitive and complex marketplace," says Carol Scott, senior technical account manager, IdentiGEN.

Marks & Spencer (M&S) is one retailer that has realised the benefits of DNA traceability to inform its supply chain and assure its customers. "DNA traceability has allowed us to differentiate our product and has increased our sales, because it has given added consumer confidence to the product we provide," says Steve McLean head of agriculture at M&S.

Leading retailers, foodservice providers and processors recognise that effective traceability is essential to inform a truly sustainable supply chain, says Scott. Consumer misperception and trust issues regarding potentially cheaper imports masquerading as British products, in addition to supplier challenges, such as carcass utilisation, all point to the requirement for accurate and precise traceability solutions.

However, it is virtually impossible for standard traceability solutions to trace proteins back to the source farm after they are disassembled, co-mingled and transformed at the scale required by industry. So, technology such as DNA TraceBack, provides effective and accurate data-driven solutions, explains Scott.

"The DNA TraceBack platform provides guaranteed transparency to both retailers and consumers, verifying that their meat and seafood products originate from approved sources and meet the required standards in terms of production practices," she says. "The technology helps to differentiate and



“DNA traceability has given added consumer confidence to the product we provide”

elevate those who are doing the right thing and delivering the standards promised and expected by consumers.”

“We all care about where our food comes from,” adds McLean from M&S. “Our 100% traceable beef comes from British farmers we know and trust. That means consumers can rest assured they adhere to our high-quality levels and animal welfare and environmental protection standards.”

Today's consumers also want to know more about the sustainability of their food, says Scott. According to US organisation FMI – The Food Industry Association, 75% of consumers will switch to a brand that provides more product information and 61% will pay more for products that specify in-depth information. “While price remains important, 71%¹ of people consider climate change as serious as Covid-19,” says Scott. “It is important to manage the paradox between value and price and move from a low-cost culture to a value culture, which values high-quality and sustainable food.”

“DNA traceability solutions, such as DNA TraceBack, make real connections between the finished product and the animal/farm it came from – which inform the rich story of the meat on your plate. Now that IdentiGEN is a part of MSD Animal Health Intelligence, a newly formed, specialised operating unit of MSD Animal Health, we have the potential to deliver objective data on animal metrics, not currently possible with any other platform.”

Source

¹IPSOS, <https://tinyurl.com/yy4u4yxg>

Building trust is in our DNA

DNA TraceBack[®] from IdentiGEN uses nature's barcode, DNA, to accurately and precisely trace beef, pork, chicken and seafood products from the fork to the farm. To learn how *DNA TraceBack[®]* can help maintain brand integrity throughout the supply chain and deliver added confidence for shoppers, contact the IdentiGEN team at info@IdentiGEN.com.

Trace it. Trust it. Taste it.

DNATraceBack.com



Retail Stores



Processing Facility



Farm

Knowles

Industry-leading solutions

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Knowles Transport

Agility, flexibility and the ability to meet rapidly changing market challenges are essential components for logistics partners operating within the grocery sector, says Alex Knowles, managing director of Knowles Transport. “The stakes are much higher. No longer is it enough to be able to simply provide a delivery solution; the right logistics service partner is key to ensuring the multitude of customer expectations are delivered at the right cost, so that retail suppliers can achieve optimal efficiency and grow their businesses,” he explains.

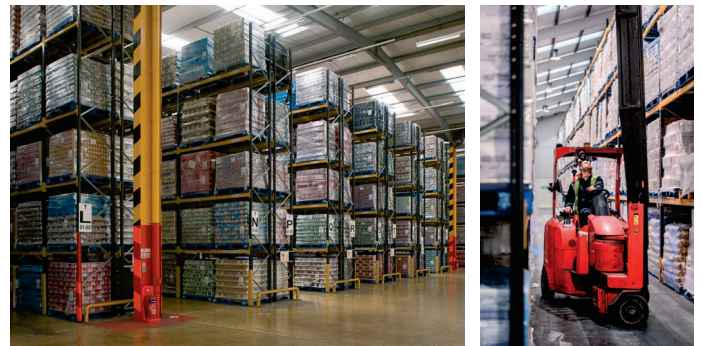
The end-to-end supply chain of any business can be a major competitive advantage if analysed, planned and correctly executed, he says. Sometimes, however, improvements and efficiency in this vital area can be overlooked in favour of other key functions such as manufacturing and sales. “With the amount of logistical adaptation in UK retail today – whether related to Brexit, Covid-19 or order size constraints – this area cannot be overlooked,” he notes.

Meeting challenges

With over 40 years’ experience in retail fulfilment, working in partnership with customers of varying size and offering a comprehensive range of services to deliver truly efficient supply chain solutions, Knowles says his business is at the forefront of logistics service providers specialising in grocery. “Whether it’s shared user consolidation or dedicated solutions, we work as a bolt-on to our customers’ operations to ensure we deliver a best-in-class service that meets the ever-changing demands of the supply chain – whether it’s increasing demand for e-commerce fulfilment, co-pack requirements or flexing our model to manage large variances in sales volumes.”

Industry-leading standards

Ensuring your logistics provider is operating to the highest possible standards is more complex than ever, adds Knowles. “It’s not just a question of providing exemplary service levels, but selecting a partner that follows ethical, environmental and quality



“The end-to-end supply chain of any business can be a major competitive advantage if analysed, planned and correctly executed”

standards,” he says. “All of Knowles’ sites are process-driven and fully BRC-accredited for both warehousing and transport. We are SEDEX-registered and audited throughout our operations.

“Sustainability is at the forefront of our strategic decision-making. This is evidenced by our ongoing investment in alternative fuel vehicles – such as Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), saving 20% more on CO₂ than diesel engines – and the use of renewable energy at many of our warehousing sites.”

All of Knowles’ customers are central to its strategy and have access to decision-makers within the business, he adds. “Whether it’s analysis of customers’ data, adaptation of our model to achieve best cost and service, or our industry-leading IT utilisation and integration, our ability to deliver world-class supply chain solutions and infrastructure without losing sight of our family-run ethos enables us to meet and exceed customer expectations.”

Sustainable Supply Chain Solutions



- Contract Logistics
- End-to-End Solutions
- Warehouse and Transport fulfilment
- Full Loads
- Groupage and Small Order Quantities
- Industry Leading IT Solutions
- E-commerce
- Extensive Co-Packing Capabilities



Prologis UK

Inside track on rail freight

DETAILS

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KEY SERVICES

Prologis RFI DIRFT

– the UK's leading rail-served logistics park, with three on-site rail freight terminals and another state-of-the-art terminal under construction



While the coronavirus pandemic has caused a sharp reduction in the number of passengers travelling by train, the role of the UK's railways in transporting essential goods requiring distribution to supermarkets and national distribution centres has never been more important, says Prologis. In fact, during the first national lockdown, and for the first time in many years, rail freight was prioritised over passenger trains: proof, if proof were needed that rail freight, and the West Coast mainline, really is the backbone of Britain's logistics supply chain.

As bricks-and-mortar stores closed their doors in March and with many supermarkets across the UK operating at, or close to, peak operational capacity, rail freight played a vital role in ensuring critical food and supplies could continue moving smoothly and Prologis DIRFT [Davenport International Rail Freight Terminal] in Northamptonshire was at the heart of the UK's distribution efforts. Located on the West Coast Mainline, DIRFT's central location in the East Midlands acts as a key rail freight interchange between Scotland and London. "In fact, such is the importance of these two key routes, Network Rail prioritised them – an indication of their national significance in keeping the UK flow of goods moving," says Prologis.

Over the past few years, rail freight, once associated with the movement of heavy, dirty substances such as coal and aggregates, has found itself a starring role in the distribution of all manner of goods – from water and whisky to all-important household essentials such as toilet paper, milk and cereal, adds Prologis. And, thanks to a global push for greener, more resilient supply chains, which reduce HGV miles and subsequent air pollution, its popularity is set to increase.

"While the importance of rail freight is often overlooked, its contribution to the UK economy is significant," explains the company. "The UK rail freight industry now brings an estimated £1.6bn¹ per year in productivity gains for UK businesses, and this is expected to grow, particularly given that the current



“Rail freight has found itself a starring role in the distribution of all manner of goods – from water and whisky to all-important household essentials”

crisis has brought the need for more resilient supply chains into sharp relief. There is also significant government policy supporting the use of rail-served logistics.”

Thousands of tonnes of freight pass through the three rail freight terminals at Prologis DIRFT every day and, while some of the items may be well-known, others may come as a surprise. “Automotive parts, furniture, electrical goods, clothes and most of the nation's favourite food brands all pass through DIRFT,” it says. “In fact, consumer goods transportation now accounts for 40%² of the UK's rail freight and this number is growing rapidly.

“With punctuality for freight trains over 90%³ and the ability to move goods in a quick, cost-effective and sustainable way, it's little wonder that supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury's – both of whom use rail freight to serve their national distribution centres at DIRFT – rely on rail to get goods where they need to be.

“As the current crisis continues and, with Christmas yet to deliver, it's good to know that rail freight is helping the sector keep everything on track.”

Source

- ¹ Department for Transport, Rail Freight Strategy
- ² Network Rail, Freight Network Study
- ³ The European Rail Freight Association

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

What are you doing to address the problem of air pollution in your supply chain? With more and more companies using rail freight to create resilient and sustainable supply chains, Prologis RFI DIRFT is perfectly placed to provide the location and flexibility needed to deliver a cleaner, greener future for everyone.

DELIVERING ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Each tonne of freight transported by rail **cuts carbon emissions by 76%** compared with road haulage.



IMPROVING AIR QUALITY

Rail produces up to **10 times less small particulate matter than road haulage** and as much as 15 times less nitrogen oxide for the equivalent mass transported.



REDUCE CONGESTION

Each freight train at DIRFT removes up to 76 HGV's from UK roads, that **translates to 1.66 billion fewer HGV kilometres a year.**



FAIR AND FLEXIBLE

A choice of three rail freight terminals allows for **greater flexibility and competitive pricing.**



THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

Located at the heart of the UK's domestic intermodal network, with three rail freight terminals and the flexibility to provide sustainable warehousing from 100,000 – 1.6 million sq ft, **Prologis RFI DIRFT has everything a modern supply chain needs.**



XPtech

Safe sign-off assured

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KEY BRANDS

Sign4
XPAssetSmart
SmarterScheduler



The biggest innovation for XPtech over the past year has been its response to Covid-19 whereby it developed the Sign4 product. "This allows a truly contactless proof of delivery mechanism," says chief technology officer Steve Coppin. "Those receiving deliveries can now use their own personal devices to provide a signature and indicate a successful delivery or collection rather than touch a driver tablet."

"Quickly adopted by some key global companies, Sign4 is unique in the market and a game-changer for anyone seeking absolute confirmation of a delivery or collection," says Coppin. "Aside from medical safety, this solution reduces the amount of lost or missing deliveries and can slash driver turnaround times."

Environmental footprint reduced

Many SME firms that still use pen and paper for delivery confirmation can quickly and easily adopt Sign4 and immediately reduce their environmental footprint, explains chief executive officer Oliver Woodmansee. "Our other asset management and driver scheduling products optimise efficiency, creating significant running cost savings, maximise insight and reduce the number of logistic journeys needed."

"Most of our customers' long-term strategic thinking has changed radically, due to both coronavirus and economic horizons as a result of Brexit," he adds. "Our ability to support our customers through our technology on this journey represents a significant



“Those receiving deliveries can now use their own personal devices to provide a signature and indicate a successful delivery”

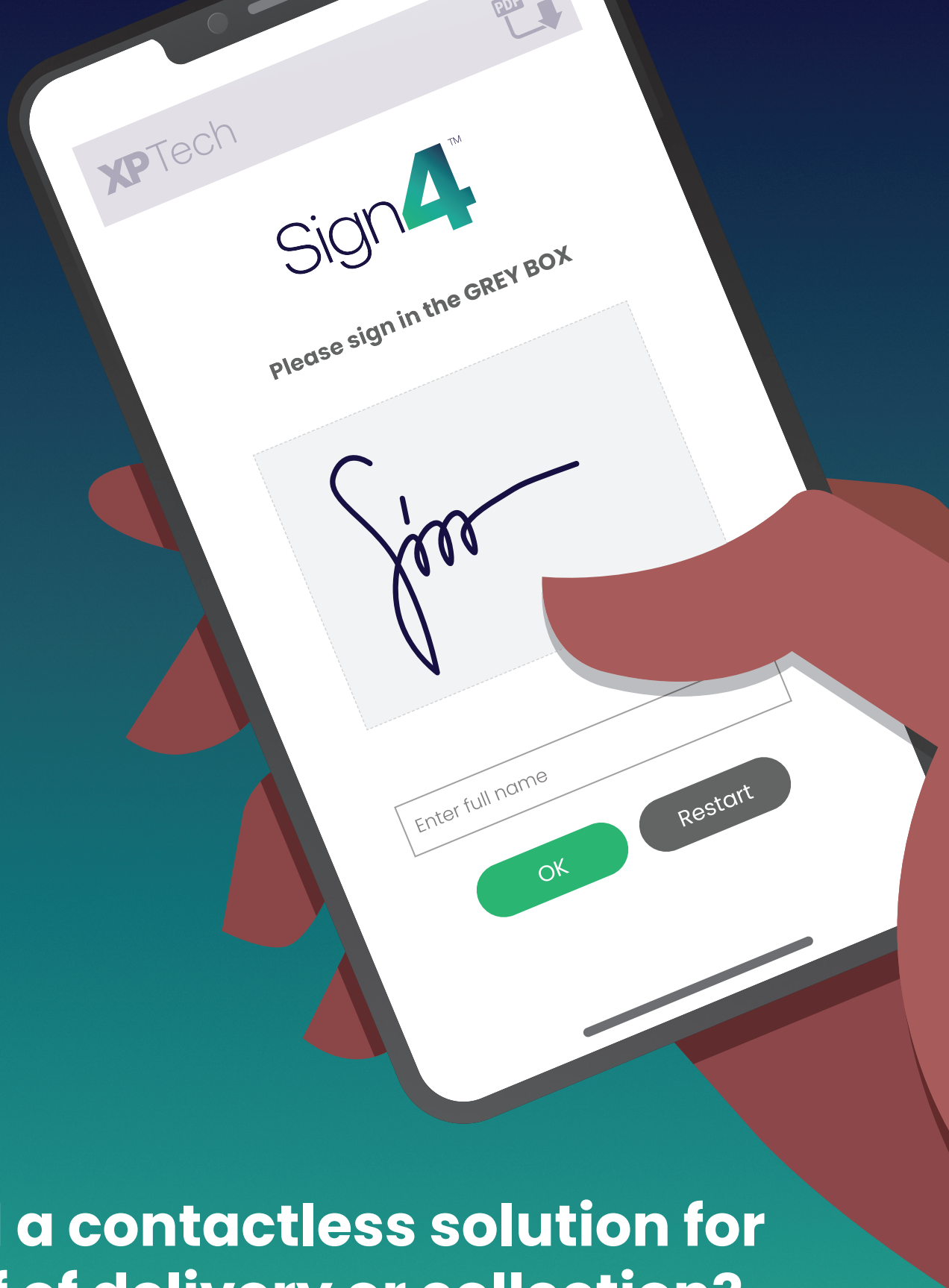
opportunity. We're in the great position of being able to deliver exciting and innovative change very quickly due to an agile approach to linking and developing systems. As a tech and logistics provider, we work with our customers' long-term strategies to deliver value and enable strategic change."

Complex issues resolved

As an innovative technology firm, XPtech's customers have always approached the company to solve complex process issues, particularly those that support asset management and e-commerce, says Woodmansee. "We are getting lots of requests to help people adapt to a digital environment. This has resulted in technologies such as Sign4. Almost everyone has a device in their pocket and logistics firms are beginning to harness what has been an under-utilised concept."

Covid-19 has meant customers are now requesting solutions that originally had a development cycle of two to three years within two to three months, reveals XPtech, adding that the company is "perfectly placed to win from this change".





Need a contactless solution for proof of delivery or collection?

Sign4 is a smarter software that enables customers to instantly **Sign4** their deliveries using their own device

Immediately available to your drivers' tablets via API and with zero set-up costs, start your free trial now xpotech.co/sign4

XP Tech
SMARTER TECHNOLOGY



From the warehouse to their house.

Packaging presents a big opportunity.

It's amazing what the right packaging can do for your business. Our designs and insights have improved the supply chains, sustainability and profitability for businesses worldwide. So, if you'd like to create efficiencies in your business, check out the packaging company that is delivering results for 64,000 customers.

Discover more about our end-to-end
packaging solutions at smurfitkappa.com